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SERMON DXLIV.

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THE SINNER DEAD UNTO GOD.

"And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins."—EPH. 2: 1.

THE words, *hath he quickened*, not in the original but supplied in the English version, are necessary to complete the sense, and plainly implied in the context. The verse, without these words, is a description of the condition of all who are not the subjects of Christ's spiritual kingdom. In declaring that Christians, now quickened by the grace of God, were dead before this change,—dead in trespasses and sins,—we are to understand the apostle as describing the situation of all who are not renewed by the power of the Holy Ghost. The impenitent sinner is dead. This is the uniform language of the Scriptures. "He that heareth my word and believeth on Him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

This death in trespasses and sins is sometimes understood as referring to the extreme sinfulness of the unregenerate man; or, to the entire loss of God's favor; or, to the condemnation which is already pronounced against the ungodly, the fearful issue of which is the second death. Yet is there ever a difficulty in discussing this subject. However simple and forcible the explanations of this figurative language, what encouragement is there in the attempt to convince the dead that they are dead, or to show the dead in what sense they are dead?

These various definitions of the death of the impenitent are not comprehended. They seem rather speculative dogmas, or theological doctrines, than practical truths. Another way may be adopted, and seems demanded, to justify this language of the Word of God in which sinners are said to be dead. The method now proposed is by a simple analogy with temporal death.

As a description rather than a definition of death, it may be said that it is an interruption of all harmony between the objects of sense and sensation, or perception. Let the eye of one from whom life has just departed be opened upon the most enchanting scene of beauty, let the light stream in from a thousand points of attraction in the clouds above and the foliage and the flowers beneath, and yet there is no sensation, no delight. Why? The organ is complete. Here are all the lenses and mirrors necessary to perfect vision. This is just like the eye of him who, by the side of the dead body, is filled with admiration of the scene. The beautiful landscape stands forth in all its charms. The light is performing its rapid journey from its source to each object of interest, and from each object to the eye,—the eye is complete in its organization, just as well adapted to vision as the eye of the living, and yet there is no sensation, no perception. This is death. The harmony between the objects of sense and sensation was broken up when life left the body.

The funeral-dirge at the burial of the honored dead may move the living to tears, by its plaintive harmony; but he whose death has called out these strains of lamentation hears them not. His ear may be perfect, a complete arrangement for hearing, but the harmony between sound and hearing is broken up by death.

The air may be laden with the sweet breath of flowers, and yet no effect is produced by the fragrance upon him who is sleeping in death. The harmony between outward things and the enjoyments of sense is at an end. This is what the wise man means when he says, "But the dead know not anything."

Now, the death which the Scriptures affirm of all the impenitent is made manifest in just the same way. There is an entire want of harmony between God and their souls. They have animal life, mental energy, and the natural affections, just as the dead man has the organs of sense; but as these organs do not respond to the influences exerted upon them by light and sound and color, so the mind and the affections of the sinner do not answer to the calls and claims of God,—the harmony that should ever exist between a creature and its Creator is broken up, and in this sense the sinner is dead.

Let us notice this want of harmony in a few particulars.

I. The knowledge of the existence and presence of God does not produce reverence.

No man can regard the existence of an exalted fellow-creature—of one who is distinguished for his knowledge, his benevolence, his bravery, or his great success—without a feeling of veneration. It is the spontaneous tribute to human greatness. And when there is true moral excellence, goodness as well as greatness, it is impossible to refuse the homage of the soul. If we are brought into the immediate presence of those who are thus exalted in station and irreproachable in character, there is ever an involuntary feeling of reverence excited. No one can stand at the tomb of Washington, or in the audience of a banished king, without offering such a tribute to greatness, unless first every sensibility be dead within him.

The sinner, unless an utter atheist, believes that there is a God, though he cannot see him any more than he can see the forms of the illustrious dead, whose history fills his mind with awe. He believes that God is every where present; he cannot deny this unless he deny the existence of God altogether. He is ever standing before this great Jehovah, and yet he has not a feeling of reverence on this account. How can he prevent it? In every other case reverence follows the recognition of an exalted being; here is the most glorious Being in the universe, whose presence is acknowledged, and yet no feeling of veneration, no deep emotion of the soul is manifest. What can be the solution? There may be the eye, and the light, and the object of vision, but if life be wanting there can be no sensation, no perception. Here are knowledge, belief, an acknowledgment of the truth; God is present, and this is perceived intellectually, but there is no corresponding emotion of soul, no reverence. Is not this the only explanation?—the sinner is dead unto God!

II. The abundant favors of God do not awaken gratitude.

That these favors are abundant every sinner knows, and is often ready to admit. There is not a man so insensible as not to perceive that for the continuance of life and health he is indebted to God. When the light of the blessed sun shines upon him on the return of a summer morning; when the refreshing showers descend upon his fields, he knows, he will not deny, that the living God bestows these rich gifts. When the intellect is in exercise, he perceives and acknowledges his indebtedness to God for every good thing. Gratitude is a common, a natural emotion for favors received. We cannot choose but feel it. It springs up spontaneously in the human soul. If in some cases it seem to be wanting when there is occasion for it, then the reproach with which the ungrateful are visited is proof that gratitude is expected, and is considered essential to the healthful

action of the soul. You hear that some one is making strong exertions in your behalf,—you receive an uninterrupted succession of favors from some one who is under no obligation to treat you with peculiar kindness: it would be thought very strange if you should not be affected by such manifestations of favor, if you should not make the usual exhibitions of gratitude. You would wonder at yourself if you did not discover a glowing of the heart towards such a benefactor, and a desire to please him in every possible manner.

And yet the fact is, that with so much to excite it, the un-renewed man does not feel any gratitude towards God. He may suppose that he does. There may be a feeling of satisfaction when he is enjoying the comforts of life, a kind of contentment with the allotment of Providence because it is so favorable to him; this he mistakes for gratitude. Nothing is more common than to hear such persons say not merely that they are grateful, but that they really love God, their Benefactor. But gratitude is not language. It is feeling, and feeling must show itself if it really exist; and while the impenitent sinner refuses to obey God in the simplest requirement, and continues to reject Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, who is sent to be his Saviour,—while he has a spirit of rebellion, most manifest whenever he is tried by affliction, it is evident, whatever he may say of himself, or think of himself, that he has no gratitude towards God. Why not? Why should there not be here, as in other cases, an answer of the heart to manifest kindness? There may be the ear, complete in its arrangement for hearing, and the air may be stirred with the loudest sounds or the sweetest notes of music, but if life be wanting, there can be no sensation, no perception. Here are favors abundant, the enjoyment of these favors, a heart that can be awakened to gratitude towards other benefactors, but there is no gratitude for heavenly blessings. Is not this the only explanation?—the sinner is dead unto God!

III. *The love and compassion of God do not produce love.*

This is common among men. "Love is the lover for love." Let it be perceived that others are bestowing upon us the warmth of their affection, and we cannot withhold an answering emotion. The heart that is chilled by death answers not, although the sorrowing mourners weep around the grave; but the heart of the living is most easily moved by such evidences of love. This is seen not only among the sensitive, the susceptible, who cherish the tenderer emotions, but also among the stern and the savage. He that cannot be subdued by force or by chains, becomes a child beneath the appeal of love and tenderness—amid the evidences of love for him. When love exhibits itself in the form of compassion, and we are the objects of undeserved affection—

when those whom we have injured love us, and strive to bless us, it is not in our nature to be insensible to such an influence. The hardest heart will melt before it.

Where is there such love and compassion as God exhibits toward us? We are poor, wretched sinners. We deserve his displeasure. His law, which we have broken, condemns all transgression, and the dreadful penalty of sin is eternal death. Yet such is his compassion that he provides a way of salvation. His love originates the scheme of redemption. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." The display of the love of Christ is the most wonderful the world has ever seen. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. But God commendeth (magnifieth) his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." Here is the simple truth, so full of meaning: God, in the person of his Son, gave his precious life for the salvation of the lost! And what do the impenitent care about it? The man who has plunged into the flood to save you from drowning, you love while you live; but this Jesus, who has indeed given his life to save you from eternal destruction, has no place in your heart. It is evident that this is the truth, for it is the very essence of the sin of impenitence that Christ is rejected as the Saviour. How can this be? Here are infinite compassion and love appealing to a heart that can be moved by other appeals for answering affection, and yet it stirs not now. Is it not because the sinner is dead unto God?

IV. *The glory of God does not call forth praise to Him to whom it is due.*

Upon everything around us, the glory of the great Architect is stamped. He has created, and he sustains the rolling worlds in their courses. We praise the astronomer who penetrates the heavens with keenest glance, who investigates the laws of the material universe, and sets forth to our wondering minds the truths of this celestial science; but unto Him who made these worlds and established these laws, the careless sinner renders no praise. We bestow deserved commendation upon the composer and performer of a difficult piece of music, especially because amid all the varying sounds, amid the different parts, *the harmony* is preserved, delighting the ear and moving the soul; but the music of nature, the harmony and order ever manifest amid the intricate maze of the movements of the universe, secured by the invisible hand of God, this calls out from the impenitent no praise. The painter who has succeeded in making a tolerable imitation of nature we praise in highest terms for his success; but the great Artist, who has set the copy, whose

is the original design,—in whose picture the moving cloud, the waving foliage, and the running brook have a charm not to be imparted to the canvas,—receives no admiration. We delight to honor those who are already invested with a diadem of glory, whether the monarch's crown, the conqueror's laurel, or the poet's wreath; we are prone to exalt that which is exalted; but God, who is most glorious of all, who shines forth in creation, in providence, in his nature and his government with an effulgence that blinds the heavenly host, receives no praise from the sinner's heart. Why? Need we ask? Here is glory, calculated to make its impression and produce its effect; here is a heart most easily moved by such exhibitions, and yet now not moved at all. Is not the sinner dead unto God?

V. The teachings of God do not produce faith.

Mankind are naturally credulous. We are compelled to receive so much upon trust, that we are wisely endowed with a confidence in each other's testimony. We believe what we hear said for truth. In early years we have not judgment to decide between probable truth and manifest falsehood, and thus we receive many erroneous impressions. We learn soon by painful experience that deception and falsehood are common among fallen creatures, and that we must be upon our guard in respect to what we hear, or we may be led into fatal error. But for all this, we still go on believing, reposing in faith upon the communications that are made to us, especially when such statements are given by those of good character, and who have suitable facilities for becoming acquainted with the truth. We cannot choose but believe, when one in whom we place confidence as a man of veracity gives us an account of that of which he has been an eye-witness, even though it contain many things contrary to our own experience, and which seem to border on the marvellous.

God teaches mankind in respect to many most important subjects: he speaks in his Word of the sinner's ruin, and of the way of salvation; he gives descriptions of the eternal world and of man's future state; and yet, while the truth of God cannot be questioned, if his existence be admitted, and though it must be acknowledged that he has perfect acquaintance with that of which he speaks, yet in the mind of the sinner there is no such cordial reception of the truth as can be called faith. He can yield himself to the teachings of a parent—to the teachings of an instructor in earthly science—to the testimony of his fellow-men; and yet having all this ability to exercise faith, and having such simple and clear and important truth revealed in the Word of God, he receives it not. Though he may not deny it, he has no such confidence in it, it produces no such impression

upon him, exerts no such influence over him, as the declarations of his fellow-men. How can we account for this, except by saying, the sinner is dead unto God?

VI. *The warnings of God do not lead to caution, nor his threats to fear, nor his promises to his favor.*

We give heed to the admonition of a fellow-man who assures us that there is evil in a certain course, and we demand it as due upon common principles of benevolence that when any one has become acquainted with a dangerous path he should make it known, and thus put others upon their guard. If the watchmen upon the walls see the sword coming, and do not give the alarm, the blood of those that perish is required at their hands. But how strange it would be if those who heard the notes of warning should give them no attention. Could any be unconcerned but the sleeping or the dead? So threats usually produce an immediate effect. No one can remain at ease if he knows he has an enemy who has threatened to take his life; and his fear is increased if this enemy be powerful and able to fulfil his evil designs. On the other hand, promises of good from the rich and powerful are ever the strongest encouragements to seek for the favor which is thus offered. The course which all pursue under the influence of warnings, threatenings, and promises is well known. We can determine beforehand how men will act in view of these.

But all such calculations are set at naught in the sinner's conduct towards his Maker. God gives the most distinct warnings in his Word. He sets before us the dangers that surround us, to many of which without such Divine warning we might be insensible; tells of approaching death, which may be at any moment but at the remove of a single step; tells of the judgment, that day of trial and of terrible retribution to the ungodly; tells of the world of woe in which the finally impenitent shall dwell for ever: he utters these warnings in the most startling language, such as, "Prepare to meet thy God;" and yet the sinner, thus in danger, thus warned, gives no heed to it, and rushes on as if he were passing over a smooth and easy road that must surely terminate in eternal joy. Is it not because he is dead unto God? He would heed the warning of a fellow-man.

The sinner is not merely exposed to danger, of which warning is given so that he may have an opportunity of escaping, if escape be possible, but is condemned already—is under the curse, and in this state the most terrible language in the Word of God is used against him. "God shall pour out his fury upon the wicked." "The Lord reserveth wrath for his enemies." "Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish shall be upon every soul of man that doeth evil." But these threats produce no

effect. The impenitent hear God say that he is angry with the wicked every day. They hear the benevolent Saviour say, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" and they know that they may die the next hour, and then all the evils of a wretched, hopeless eternity will come upon them; and yet they pay no attention to these threatenings; the ordinary fear that would be produced by the threats of those so much inferior to the Almighty in power to injure or destroy, is not excited within them. How can the sinner hear these threats and be devoid of fear? Why is not every one who is an enemy of God now trembling in terror in view of his coming wrath? Have we not still the same answer? These sounds are falling upon the ears of those who are dead unto God.

The same is true of his promises. They are most abundant and precious, uttered by One who cannot fail in ability or willingness to do all that he has promised, whose sincerity cannot be questioned; they relate to all the necessities of man, physical and moral, temporal and eternal; and yet they do not induce the sinner to seek the favor of God; they do not prevail to lead him on in the way of the attainment of what is promised. The sinner hears it, the promise of eternal life, "to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honor, and immortality"—the promise of salvation to all who believe in the name of the Son of God—the promise of a full supply to all who thirst and who will come to him and drink; and yet he is not moved by these promises, will not take the rich blessings so freely set before him—will not become a partaker of the offered favor of Heaven. When neither warnings, alarms, nor threats terrify, nor promises allure, must we not conclude that it is because the sinner is dead unto God?

In all these particulars, and many more that might be named, there is just such an interruption of harmony between cause and effect, as in the case of a dead body amid beauty, or music, or sweet odors. In this respect, every one who is yet unconciliated unto God is dead. This dreadful condition of sinners cannot appear unto us as it does to the spirits above us. They can see the difference between the living and the dead. How strange it must appear to them to see creatures of God thus unaffected by the exhibitions of his presence, and favors, and compassion, and glory, and teachings, and warnings, and threats, and promises. It must seem to them like the banquet of the dead. The ancient Peruvians preserved the bodies of their deceased Incas or kings by a skilful method of embalming, and on certain occasions they were brought out, clothed in their princely attire, to preside at a feast. The banquet was served

by the menials of the household, and the invited guests partook of the melancholy fare in the presence of the royal phantom, seated at the head of the table, with the same attention to the forms of courtly etiquette as if the living monarch had presided. How hideous such a spectacle! The angels look upon just such scenes all over the earth, the dead among the living, going through with the forms of life, but dead unto God!

Three questions, with their answers, will constitute the application of this discourse.

1st. Is there any propriety in addressing sinners upon such a subject? Shall we speak to the dead? Yes. Because in other respects the heart, and soul, and mind of the impenitent are alive. This is a death unto God. We may urge even the dead to exert themselves to secure their own salvation. They can see and comprehend their perilous condition; they can at least intellectually admit the justice of these claims of God; they can perceive the fitness and worth of the plan of redemption by Jesus Christ. This death may itself be illustrated by the condition of one oppressed with the dreadful incubus often connected with sleep and frightful dreams, but sometimes occurring in wakefulness—when the victim seems to be in the grasp of an unseen but powerful enemy, and cannot stir, while at the same time he is conscious that a single movement would bring relief. At length, after a painful struggle, a finger is moved, and then the whole arm, and the contest is over. The sinner has upon him the incubus of a depraved heart—the pressure of a world alluring and seductive—a weight of sin bearing him down to hell, and already are the chains of the great adversary of souls thrown around him. He is bound hand and foot, and just about to be cast into outer darkness. He can scarcely stir. But though he cannot lift hand or foot, perhaps the lip, the tongue may move in a prayer for help. Can you not, perishing sinner, call up at least so much interest in your own case as to affect your heart, and inspire the simple prayer, “God be merciful to me a sinner”? This may be the beginning of life. This first effort may be needed, in the arrangement of Divine Providence, to remove the weight of sin from your soul. One such movement, itself excited by the Holy Ghost, may bring light, and peace, and joy, and life in its result; and it may be said of you: “And you *hath he quickened* who was dead in trespasses and sins.”

2d. Is not this death an excusable condition? Is there any blame to be attached to it? It is *not* excusable. It is blameworthy. Because the sinner is a suicide; the guilt of self-murder is resting upon each one in this state. The connection of

man with fallen Adam, and the providence of God in bringing us into being with depraved hearts, are charged with our guilt, but in vain. As it was said of old to the wandering people of God, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself!" so now it must be said of all who love sin so well, who have committed sin enough, for which they are alone responsible, to bring upon them all the evils which threaten the ungodly, "O sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself!" It is death that locks up your heart against all the gracious offers and kind appeals of God; it is death that forbids you to hold the communion of a child with your heavenly Father; and, worst of all, it is death that you have brought upon yourself by your own sins.

Must you, then, perish inevitably, with the doom of a self-murderer resting upon you? No; this is not necessary. God has provided a remedy even for this desperate condition. If you have seen the truth upon this subject—if your intellect only is alive to perceive your spiritual death, you will not marvel, but rather rejoice to hear the Great Teacher say, "Ye must be born again." It is life that the sinner needs. The change which must take place to restore the lost to the love and favor of God, is a change from death to life; and therefore the propriety of the language used to describe it is most evident. What should it be called but a new birth—regeneration—a change of heart—being made a new creature? The apostle, in the text, addressing the Ephesian Christians, says: "And you hath he quickened," i. e., to you hath he given life, "who were dead in trespasses and sins." This is the work of the Holy Ghost—the work of God in the soul. It is not required that new faculties and powers should be imparted, but only that life should be given to those already possessed, but lying dormant, dead unto God. A dead body, still complete in organization, would only need the infusion of life to be ready at once to use every organ and employ every limb. The impenitent sinner has what is necessary to be employed in loving and serving God, but life is wanting. This can be communicated to the soul only by the same Almighty Spirit that at first breathed into man the breath of life. Over each one restored to the favor of God and made a new creature in Christ Jesus, there is a jubilee in heaven. The angels rejoice over the repenting sinner, and the Father himself meets the prodigal with the warm embrace of infinite love, exclaiming, "This my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found."

3d. Finally. Does not this exhibit the real difference between the Christian and the sinner?—the one is alive, the other is dead unto God. They may be just alike in other respects, having the same natural endowments of body and soul; having

made the same attainments in science and in all matters of worldly advancement; just as the body of a living man may exactly resemble the body of another from which life has just departed. These may appear alike to the careless observer; but yet how great the difference! The one is alive, the other is dead. The Christian is alive, and the sinner is dead unto God. This difference may be made manifest in many ways. Speak in the presence of these two of God and heaven,—the one answers with glowing countenance; the face of the other is rigid, and his tongue still as in the silence of the grave. Propose an act that may glorify God,—the Christian runs with all the vigor of life to perform it; the sinner stands still as if bound with the fetters of death. Tell of the love of Christ,—the one, with streaming eyes, cries out, "He died for me;" the other is as devoid of emotion as if his very heart were frozen in the sepulchre. Call for a contribution to promote the cause of Christ,—the one answers to the call as a faithful steward of God; the other heeds it no more than if he were as insensible as the gold he grasps so eagerly. It is indeed to be admitted that all who profess Christ are not thus alive at all times, and that some who are not Christians, under the influence of other motives than a supreme love of God, do assist in the performance of many Christian duties; but yet the truth remains unshaken by these exceptions,—the Christian is alive, the sinner is dead unto God.

And this is the very distinction that will exist for ever in heaven and in hell. It is life to be where God, and Christ, and all the holy dwell. It is life to expand at once to the fullest capacity of our being, in knowledge, and holiness, and joy, and yet to grow continually wiser, and holier, and happier under the light of God's reconciled countenance. It is called eternal life! It is death, the second death, eternal death, to be banished from heaven, shut up in the pit of woe, dying, and yet never to reach the last despairing pain—sinking for ever beneath the wrath of an angry God!

"There is a death whose pang
Outlasts the fleeting breath:
Oh what eternal horrors hang
Around the second death!

"Lord God of truth and grace,
Teach us that death to shun,
Lest we be banished from thy face,
And ever more undone."

SERMON DXLV.

BY REV. J. N. GRANGER, OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, PROVIDENCE, R. I.

THE JOY OF THE ANGELS.

"I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance."—LUKE 15 : 7.

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."—LUKE 15 : 10.

It is well sometimes to turn our thoughts to the heavenly world; and this contemplation is most inviting when it is assisted by persons and facts with which we are familiar. In this delightful employment the doctrine of angels affords us more aid than we are ready at first to acknowledge.

Jesus Christ is, indeed, the grand link which holds our faith to the unseen world. Uniting in his person both the human and the divine—neither God nor man alone, but both God and man in perfect union—we surrender our faith to him. He is our Great High Priest, who hath passed into the heavens. If we had no other aid to faith, we would trust alone in him. Although he is now "far above angels, and principalities, and powers," all whom are now "subject unto him," our faith would follow him to his highest throne. That ascension—that assumption of lawful authority by *our* Saviour and Friend and Brother—that glorified human nature which he carried up, far up, to the seat of the divinest glory, which Adam, and Enoch, and Moses, and David, and all the prophets have gazed upon *there*—it is this which makes heaven real to us, and near at hand.

Nevertheless, there are minor aids which we all need, but which, in contrast with this greater one, we are too apt to forget.

Perhaps there are few points of faith upon which Christians of every age and of every sect have been more united than on this: the existence of a higher order of intelligences, beings of exalted wisdom and virtue, whom we call angels. Although we know little of the nature of their influence upon us, or how their agency is employed to promote our happiness, it is not difficult to understand how we are aided by knowing that they stand *between* us and the unapproachable grandeur of the One Being, whom saints and angels adore. Raised above us in power and virtue, they are yet vastly inferior to the Infinite God.

As compared with *men*, they are, indeed, greatly superior to us; so much so, that the apostle John, struck with admiration of the angel who showed to him the glories of the New Jerusalem, forgot, for a moment, that it was only his "fellow-servant" he would worship. But when, on the other hand, they are compared with *God*, they fall infinitely below him—they approach near to us, and man is then "but a little lower than the angels."

The advantage to us of this knowledge is—

1. That it gives distinctness to our thought of the unseen world. It peoples it. From the Scriptures we learn that angels, in their flights through the "void expanse," have sometimes touched and trod our earth. They have been here. Here they have walked and ministered. They have floated in this air. Their voices have been heard in music such as mortals never raise. They have spoken, have instructed, and have passed away. Paul speaks of "an innumerable company of angels;" Luke, of "a multitude of the heavenly host;" Christ, of "twelve legions of angels." And Daniel, in a vision of the Ancient of Days, and of the throne of his glory, beheld "thousand thousands who ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand who stood before him."

2. But it is more to my present purpose to notice another use which the doctrine of angels serves. It is one which is sometimes employed in the Holy Scriptures. The doctrine affords us a point of observation where we may look down to earth and upon ourselves.

Irresistibly we are led to ask how *finite* beings, who are wiser and holier than we are, regard us, and regard our choices. We take, in imagination, the position which they occupy, and we judge ourselves in their stead. Nor is there any thing irreverent towards God in this. It is but the conduct of children, all dutiful, all affectionate towards a parent, who sometimes take counsel of each other, the younger of the older, while all alike rejoice in a parent's smile, and own a parent's law.

It is for this purpose, as it seems to me, that our Saviour employs the touching words of the text. The Pharisees, who despised the penitent sinner, and who despised him the more because he *was* penitent, were referred to the different estimates which the angels of God put on such a character, and to the feelings with which they regard his conversion. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance." It is from this high point of observation, that we are invited to view the stupendous change which is effected in a sinner's return to God. We are thus guarded against any

low views and mean opinions of a moral act like this. The interest which these high intelligences have in it, dignifies it in the eyes of men, and rebukes their scorn.

It cannot be difficult, nor need it be unprofitable, to pursue this thought. The statement of fact, which Christ has made, justifies this use of his language. At the same time, it limits the subject, and guards us against all uncertain and unprofitable speculation.

The Jews had a saying, that "the angels weep whenever a Hebrew sins." Whether our Lord had this saying in mind or not, we have no means of knowing. It is, however, certain that it is in fine contrast with the language he has himself employed. If angels *weep* whenever a *Hebrew* sins, they rejoice with singing when a sinner, whoever he may be, Publican, Pharisee, or Gentile, repents; yea, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. The Pharisees held that a genuine Hebrew rarely transgressed the law of God, and that when he did the angels wept in sorrow as at a brother's fall. Christ passes at once above all that is false in the thought. He rejects whatever is narrow and selfish, and all that is falsely sentimental. He teaches that these pure and benevolent beings not only take the liveliest interest in our welfare, *but that they are in perfect sympathy with his principles and practice.* Their sympathies are attracted wherever his are, so that while he, their Lord and Master, is on the earth, welcoming to his open arms the most despised penitent, they, in their seats of bliss, celebrate the event in notes of loudest praise.

In endeavoring to set before our minds the event of a sinner's conversion, as it would be presented to a mind in all respects superior to our own, I have no wish to make any unnatural use of the doctrines of Christianity. I wish to borrow no aid from what is uncertain or merely probable. I desire to speak soberly of what I am fully persuaded must be true.

The interest with which angels regard a sinner's repentance is, in kind, the same as the joy of all good men. But it is surer and greater, as their natures are superior to ours. I remark, then,

I. In the first place, that they rejoice in each transition from sin to holiness, as an event *which they could not have foretold.* The language of Christ seems to imply that it is the *joy of good news* which they feel. This is explained by remembering, that no such pleasure as this is any where ascribed to *God.* Love, compassion, forgiveness, complacency, these are his; but not the joy of discovery.

"To Thee, there's nothing old appears;
Great God, there's nothing new!"

His infinite nature embraces the future, with the present and the past. It is not, therefore, said of *him* that *he* rejoices more over one penitent than over ninety and nine just persons. With reverence we may say that he cannot do it. Were his holiness, in which is all his delight, not infinite, could it measure and compare its delights, it would rejoice rather in the ripened character of the many, than in the new birth of the one.

But the angels are not like their Creator in this respect. Like us, they measure time. They know not the future; at least, not as God does. It is expressly said that they know not when the day of judgment will be. So that when they see a child of sin turn to God, and put on the garments of righteousness, they feel, as holy men on earth would feel, more lively joy in that event than they do over many who are already righteous. It is the *event* which thrills them. The tide of joy then rises and overflows. God's nature, however, is ever full; and as it knows no abatement of his, alone, infinite bliss, so it knows no rise.

The justness of the *facts* of the Scriptures to the *nature* of the beings whom they describe, whether God, angels, or men, is admirably illustrated in this instance, and is worthy of our most serious regard. Impostors never could have risen to so high a thought. Heathen Mythology, although corrected and refined by the most exalted human genius, never represented an unimpassioned God. And this distinguished superiority we claim, not for the Christian Scriptures only, but for the entire revelation. Thus we find it recorded in the first chapters of Genesis, that when God had, by a word, made the world; when he had set the sun and the moon in the firmament, and the stars in their courses; when he had made the sea, and filled it with its inhabitants; when he had covered the earth with verdure, and had made the birds to fly in the air, and beasts and every creeping thing upon the ground; and, lastly, had made man in his own image, to have dominion over all the works of his hand, he but looked upon his marvellous creation, and simply saw that it was "good." What satisfaction is here expressed; calm only because God's nature forbids his pleasure ever to be less!

But when this same new creation burst upon the view of angels, and *they* beheld it fresh from the hands of the Creator, it was theirs to feel the full inspiraion of the sight. "The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy!"

So in the instance of the scripture now before us. God's welcome to the repenting sinner is not the less because it is expressed in terms consistent with his most exalted character.

His estimate of such an event we gather from what he *does*; angels', from what they *feel and say*. To them, who see the reality and nature of the change, it is an event of the highest importance. The only instances in which these superior beings are represented as rejoicing, are at the creation of the universe, the birth of Jesus Christ, and the conversion of a sinner.

II. But this is not all. Great though this event be, it is not its novelty in the sinner's history, nor is it his sudden transition from darkness to light, which alone gives joy in heaven. The representations of our Saviour are inconsistent with the supposition that the event the angels celebrate is in itself trivial, much less that it is irrational and vain. I remark, then, in the second place, that they view it as a *moral change, in which their holy natures necessarily take delight*.

It is remarkable, that in this passage conversion is represented by that element in it which it is not possible for us to mistake, viz., *repentance*. Had Christ said that they rejoice when one *believes*, some would claim the character for themselves, because their faith is sound. Had he said, *when one is renewed*, some would have referred it to their baptism, when all their sins were washed away in the laver of regeneration. But there is no mistaking the terms he has employed: "when a sinner **REPENTS**." That determines his meaning. That fixes the character of the individual referred to, and the moral nature of his act. The case is that of one who, to the just view of holy angels, repents of the sins he has actually committed against his God and theirs, who sorrows for them after a godly sort, and breaks off from them with a godly hate. This is the point of immediate interest, and the one from which to view every other fact we have to present.

Were one from the ranks of those beings, who, we are told, are but a little above us, to visit our world; were he to come free from our long familiarity with the forms and fruits of sin, unprejudiced, in his estimate of human things, by habit or inclination; and could he see, not only what is said and done, but what is in the hearts of men, how certain would be his eye to fasten chiefly upon the *moral* aspect in which mankind would be presented to his view. And were he to visit the most cultivated community on earth, every where there would be spread before him the ruin which sin has wrought. He might see much which we call propriety and goodness; but save those few who have been "justified by the blood of the everlasting covenant," and are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," our good ones would be Hebrew sinners all, and the angel well might weep. There, in that unrenewed heart, he would see no love to God, no equal love to man; there, pride

and ambition ; there, lust of gold or of pleasure, or at least for independence of the Maker's will. There he would see one who dares to make light of that holiest thing there is on earth—a broken and a contrite heart. There, one who holds the truth in unrighteousness—who takes it as the Word of God, but is firmly set never to bow his will to the Divine standard, though he die the death. Every where he would see those who misinterpret the oracles of God at the suggestions of their unbelieving hearts ; and worse than all, men unaffected by the obedience and death of Christ, neglecting so great salvation, and resisting the Holy Ghost. More than we have imagined is doubtless true. Such visitations are made. Such sights are witnessed. Such reports are made in heaven, and perhaps are made, beloved, of you ; made, it may be, in circles where the departed you once loved on earth—the mother who prayed for you, the father, the tender sympathizing friend, the young companion who was called to heaven because too good for earth—wait to hear tidings of that repentance you promised them when they were dying, and which often you have promised to your God.

Now, I say of such a being, thus elevated and just in all his views, thus holy towards God, but swayed by sympathies, and subject to the lights and shades of feeling which belong to him as a finite soul, how keenly must he feel the folly and the sin which he beholds. How dark the picture which is every where open to his view. There is nothing improbable in this supposition, when we remember the language which the unerring Scriptures have employed respecting these heavenly visitors ; nothing unlikely, save that which is too imperfect in our conception, and in our statement of the case.

The reverse of this, however, is the particular case given us in the text. With such a state of things open to the celestial "watchers ;" with so dark a picture before them when they look upon the fairest spot,—a picture which shades into the deepest darkness when they look away over the vast tracts of heathenism,—how must they hail the return of *one* prodigal, and witness his penitence and prayers ! No other event could equal it in importance. Nothing human could approach it in the interest of the scene. Besides, the love which one always must have for another of like tastes and dispositions, the striking contrast in which this moral event would stand with all else an angel could discover, would, and it ought, to have its effect. And it ought to instruct us, my brethren, to know that beings who are fellow-servants with our fathers the prophets, and from whom we are not necessarily cut off in sympathy, look upon this world, and look upon us in it, with far different and with more just eyes than ours. They behold the things in which men trust and

glory, as well as the sinner who repents. They see the breadth, and they gauge the depth of our pride. They view the wealth at which we grasp, and the means we take to secure it. They behold the sails which whiten our seas, and the cities, and temples, and palaces we build. They observe and understand the objects of our admiration. But such things move them not.

Let us suppose a case. Again imagine such a being to be approaching some chosen spot. Let it be where science has built and enriched her temples, and where art displays her choicest productions. Besides the treasures of knowledge, imagine that there were gathered there all the choicest works of every age, in literature, in architecture, in sculpture and painting. Let every thing which is sublime and beautiful in the productions of human genius be realized again, and let the city be peopled only by minds the most acute, the most sensitive, the most thoughtful and profound. Let every house be the home of the most tasteful luxuries, and of the most refined manners. And would they charm an angel's eye, and move an angel's heart? Would the lofty temple awe him, or the finished picture please him? Would eloquence rouse his passions, or would music calm them? But if, in some neglected place, one poor, it may be an ignorant and vulgar man, too dull to see the glories of art, or too indigent to possess one of its luxuries, was seen to kneel on the boards of a garret, or on the cold ground at night, to pray—that would be a sight to kindle an angel's joy. Such a broken and contrite heart would seem wiser, and holier, and fairer than all that was wise and fair in the scenes and persons around it. Such a sight would make a quick appeal to the best sympathies of a just and holy mind. One would then be seen, who has long been the slave of sin, awakening to a freedom which the worldly never know. One, who has long been ignorant of God, is coming into the possession of the divinest knowledge. He who has trembled at the thought of death, is learning how to conquer it. He who has lived only for the present and for sense, begins to live wisely for immortality. The friendless, the homeless, the forsaken of the God he had rejected, is now taken to the arms of a forgiving Father.

"A transport glows in all he looks and speaks,
And the first thankful tears bedew his cheeks.
Joy, far superior joy, that much outweighs
The comfort of a few poor added days,
Invades, possesses, and o'erwhelms the soul
Of him whom hope has with a touch made whole.
'Tis heaven, all heaven, descending on the wings
Of the glad legions of the King of kings.
'Tis more—'tis God diffused through every part;
'Tis God himself triumphant in his heart."

III. But it is not merely a change of character over which the angels rejoice in lively sympathy. They rejoice over the *change in the sinner's prospects for the future.*

Although they are unable to foretell future events, they must have a much better knowledge than any we possess of the connection between a life of sin and the misery to which it leads. To them, "hell hath no covering." The more any person advances in holiness, the more clearly he discovers the necessary connection between sin and misery, and feels the justness of that Divine law which appoints it; while to those who stand much nearer to the throne than mortals may, this subject must be open with the greatest distinctness and certainty. Angels understand well the object and the terms of that probation which God has, now the second time, granted to our race; while the elevation of their moral character teaches them how much, for us, depends upon our using the boon wisely for ourselves. And when they see a sinner repent, they must have a much better appreciation than even he in his happy consciousness can possess, of the punishment he has escaped, and the rewards he has won. They see him turn, not only from the fears and worst sufferings of this life, but from the bitterness of the second death. They see him not only become a conqueror of the enemies of God and of his own soul, but enter on an endless career of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness. They best know what riches of wisdom and of love are in reserve for him, and how these contrast with all the ever-widening woes which wait on sin.

IV. The joy of the angels springs likewise from their interest in the welfare of the kingdom of Christ, their Lord, and from their labors for its success. However imperfectly *we* see the broad distinction between the kingdoms of light and darkness, to them that distinction is plain, and is paramount to all others. However different be the degrees of piety which Christians attain in this life, however much they may differ from each other in wisdom and charity, he that is least in the kingdom of God is plainly distinguished from an enemy, whoever that enemy may be. The humblest Christian, if he be such, is reckoned among the Lord's host. The setting up of the kingdom of Christ necessarily divides the inhabitants of this world into two classes, the friends of Christ, and the children of the Wicked One. Even as Christ has said: "He that is not for us is against us." The sinner's repentance is what distinguishes the one class from the other; or rather, it is the point where Christ receives the rebel and alien, and enrolls him as a faithful soldier and servant. Angels cannot be indifferent spectators of such a scene. They, more than the holiest saints

on the earth, are committed to the cause of the Redeemer, to destroy the works of the Devil, and to destroy only by winning from him the souls whom he has long enslaved. They watch the progress of that cause of holiness and of mercy which they love ; to which their Lord once gave his life in the flesh, and now gives his Spirit on the earth and his intercessions in heaven. They feel the joy of victory when his power prevails against the deceptions of Satan, and they rejoice in the honor which each conquest brings to the Saviour of sinners.

"The Son with joy looks down and sees
The purchase of his agonies ;
While saints and angels join to sing
The growing empire of their King."

We must consider their regard for the government of God. To beings who reject with contempt and disdain all sensible delights as the source of pleasure, to whom the contemplation of the Divine excellence, and the obedience of the Supreme Good, is the source of an ever-increasing and ineffable delight, nothing, beyond God himself, can be the spring of so much satisfaction as the recognition and love of his authority by others. Especially must this be the case, when the vain but guilty opposition which immortal beings have shown to his law, is exchanged for a deep repentance, and He who now rules their wills by his law becomes, as he desires, the chief object of their affections.

We have thus glanced at those things which give the angels joy when a sinner repents. We need not err on this subject, although it is one which belongs, in part, to a higher order of beings. God, who is infinitely above them as well as us, has taught us far more fully respecting *His* interest in such an event. And we only need to be informed that these, his sinless ministers, are cognizant of what takes place here below, to receive all, and more than all which I have now said. The language of Christ establishes the fact, that they rejoice over one sinner who repents. Mine is only a poor attempt to represent this touching fact to your minds and my own. My object will be gained, if the fact itself has arrested and impressed you. I will add but two remarks in conclusion.

1. The first is, that the subject teaches us how much we ought to be interested in the same thing for ourselves. It is not for themselves, but for *us*, that the angels rejoice. Their happiness springs from the purity and intensity of their benevolence. But if beings of such a character are so deeply interested in the subject of our repentance, how far more does it concern us. We are the ones in whose hearts and conscions-

ness this experience must be found. In our nature there are now, either, on the one hand, all the elements of that coming misery the angels deplore, or, on the other hand, that repentance which is the precursor of the immortal happiness they now enjoy. Can we then be indifferent to this subject? Is it possible, even in the impenitence which some of you, I fear, have long maintained against truth and conscience, to resist the appeal of this thought?

One of the most effectual means of moral improvement, is the knowledge of the light in which our conduct is regarded by persons of great wisdom and goodness, especially when they evince a deep and undeserved solicitude for our welfare. Many even teach that there is no depravity which is proof against this love; that it is the grand means of all reformation; that it is the love of superior minds which kills the angry passions; and that it is only neglect or resistance which inflames them. However this may be, all know that there is great power in such appeals, and that no one's true self-respect was ever hurt by yielding to their influence; while to reject it, is universally deemed to be the mark of stupidity, ingratitude, or confirmed depravity. So Christ teaches us that beings of rank and power, and wisdom and benevolence, to which we can lay no claim, are regarding us with the liveliest interest. Before this cloud of illustrious witnesses all the actions and characters of men are displayed. And "are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto those who shall be heirs of salvation?" The depravity which can feel no shame at rejecting the gospel of repentance in so august a presence, which can bid an impudent defiance to all their holy concern, is equalled only by that which is steeled against the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I beseech you then, beloved, by the mercies of God, and of angels too, to take up this great subject of your "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ," at this point, and conscience and the gospel will reveal the whole to you. This is no fable; but it is fact. "Believest thou the Scriptures? I know that thou believest." Take then the stand-point of an angel's view, and judge yourself and your duty.

2. My second remark is, that we learn from this subject something of the value of *repentance* in the work of spiritual conversion. In the instance of the language of the text, as I said before, we cannot mistake what is meant. So that from the judgment of all those who despise repentance, as the mark of weakness or fear, we make our appeal to a higher tribunal. We take the judgment, rather, of these sons of God.

We hear them waking the song they sung at creation, over one whose new-born hopes provoke only the contempt or the displeasure of his earthly superiors. And we ask with Paul: "Where then is the wise? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Hence, as the only means of the greatest good, we preach to you the gospel of repentance. We know that it is the wisdom of God, and the wisdom of all holy beings. And as such we have seen the wisdom of all classes of men own it, in the honest hour of death. Soon each of you must own it, when, perhaps, it will be too late for it to bring you any joy.

We have seen the sinner die lamenting, with his last breath, his folly, and shrinking from his fate. And we have seen the Christian die already reaping, in his foretastes of heaven, the solid fruits of the repentance he, long before, had exercised. We have stood in awe, as we have seen him exalted above the wise and the great of this world, and, as it were, trampling with disdain on the unbelief which would question his faith, and on the pride which would condemn that former birth-hour of his new existence. And we come with a deeper sense of the preciousness of the gospel, to beseech you to receive it. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

A SHORT SERMON.

BY THE EDITOR.

CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY.

ACTION is one of the fundamental laws of our physical and mental being. There is an imperative and deep-seated demand for it, which cannot be disregarded without serious loss and injury. Inactivity and indolence, the failing to exercise duly our bodily members and powers, will induce weakness or disease, disarrange the system, and bring on premature old age and death. The same is true of the mind. It must be *exercised*—trained to think, reason, reflect—made to work and kept actively engaged, or its powers will never be fully developed; it will remain, at best, a weak and sickly thing. Hence, God

has wisely and kindly provided for the due and healthful exercise both of the body and of the mind, and made obedience to this constitutional law of our being indispensable to success in life, and to rational happiness.

The same law holds good in *spiritual* things. The same necessity exists for activity. The demand for it is universal, and cannot be set aside. There must be **ACTIVITY**—the working of the spiritual machinery of life—the exercise of the various graces of the Spirit—the doing of daily service for God—the putting forth of earnest effort in the field of self-culture and of Christian enterprise—meditation, prayer, the reading of the Word, the exercise of charity, the visiting of the sick, the poor, and the afflicted—the planning and the accomplishing of purposes for the salvation of souls, and the revival of religion, and the prosperity of the Church of God—there must be this as a daily habit of life, or there cannot be progress in the divine life, nor a healthy spiritual development, nor the enjoyment of religion. God has wisely ordered it, that if we will not work as spiritual beings, neither shall we eat; if we will not obey the laws and follow the impulses of Christian life and Christian duty, we shall have leanness of soul, and reap only sadness of spirit and disappointment of hope. And this is why so many Christians are weak in the faith; are but babes in Christ, when they ought to be strong men. They grope their way in the dark, instead of walking in the light of God's countenance; they are sad and gloomy, when they might be joyful and cheerful. They are at ease in Zion. They will not work. They do violence to the laws of their own spiritual being, and to the laws of Christ's kingdom. They sleep when they should be awake; are inactive when a world of motives, and a world of obligations, and a world of perishing interests demand exertion—earnest, prayerful, whole-souled exertion, for the soul, for God, for mankind.

We live in a universe of wonderful activities. The Christian may sleep—may fold his arms and dream away his existence, and let his precious opportunities for self-improvement, and for doing good, which are never to return, pass away unimproved. But every thing around him rebukes such conduct and calls him to labor. The entire creation is in ceaseless motion—is ever busy; the vast systems which compose the material universe, present a scene of amazing and sublime activity; the thoughts and powers of angels, good and evil, are ever occupied; the infinite mind of God is always at work planning and executing. And the children of this world are any thing but idle; their minds and hands and resources are all worked to their utmost capacity; they drive the machinery of life with ceaseless and fearful rapidity; they run in the race for gain, for honor, for pleasure, for intellec-

tual attainment, with all the might and energy of ambition and resolution. Intellect is taxed and tortured to bring forth new inventions; the muscular and mechanical power of the world is daily augmented, and never suffered to rest; the world is ransacked for new fields of enterprise; the face of the earth is made to put on beauty—vast wildernesses are reclaimed and put under culture. Towns and cities are made to spring up on every hand. Commerce pours its tide of activity and wealth over every sea, and along every valley. Unnumbered agencies, extending through all space, and embracing the combined energies of mankind, and laying under contribution every faculty and power of rational being, and the vast forces of nature, are enlisted and crowded to their greatest capacity, in the service of this world. We do not complain of this. It is right. It is nature acting out her instincts, and developing the mighty and irrepressible energies and resources which God has given her. But we would have the Christian learn a lesson here. Oh! how strange, how out of place, seems an ease-taking indolence in one chosen to represent God, and religion, and eternity, in the midst of such activities—one put here to have a care for the soul, to look after the interests of Christ's kingdom, to be the example of all that is pure and good and truthful, the organ of the realization of eternal realities to a world of perishing sinners! Christian reader, shall we not awake and act well our part in this scene of deathless and responsible activities? The greatness of the work to be done for God and eternity—the shortness of life—the motives of the gospel—the worth of souls—the coming realities of another world, all demand activity, and bid us put far away the love of ease and sloth, and the spirit of delay and indecision, and do with our might whatsoever our hands find to do.